Process for Judging Task Validity

Rhode Island Skills Commission

Explanation and Considerations for Use

The Rhode Island Skills Commission and its network schools developed this document. It represents one approach for assessing the validity of an assignment or common task; you may choose to adopt it or may prefer to explore other approaches. It is designed to assist task developers in assessing the validity of new tasks.

As mentioned earlier in the toolkit, there are specific guidelines for developing appropriate common tasks.

JUDGING the VALIDITY of a TASK

1. Specifying the connection of a task to a standard

Goal: The proficiency assessed by the task should be clearly defined and explicitly connected to its source expectation or standard. It should be as free of interfering demands not related to the assessed proficiency as possible.

*Check Points: **The team should use the following list to review the connection between the prompt and the standards/expectations the prompt assesses. This sheet should be completed electronically and given to the recorder.***

□ Does the task specify the proficiencies required for a successful performance (e.g., problem solving, communication, research, analysis and synthesis of evidence, etc.)?
□ Is the proficiency assessed by the task aligned with one or more standards or expectations?
□ How clear is this alignment? (Does the task obviously assess the proficiency described by the standard or expectancy?)
□ Does the task ask the student to demonstrate a proficiency that is important in the real world—for example the proficiency is important for civic, political, academic, economic, career related reasons?
□ Are the kinds of information processing requirements in the task (memorizing, computing, organizing, etc.) as straightforward and simple as possible? Do they interfere with the student demonstrating the targeted proficiency?
□ Is the rubric aligned with the expectations of the task?

JUDGING the VALIDITY of a TASK (contd.)

Fair and Unbiased Content

If a task does not really measure the proficiencies it says it measures, the task cannot give a valid assessment. There are many ways that the way the task is constructed can get in the way of a student's best performance. The task may use words, slang, or jargon that is unfamiliar to a student. It may refer to things, such as racecars, with which the student has little familiarity. There is a whole realm of words, objects, assumptions, and values that vary by group membership, whether that membership is determined by gender, age, class, race, linguistic background, and so on.

Goal: The content of the task, the proficiencies in the task, and the language of the task should be accessible to all students, regardless of background. Put another way, the task should not favor any particular group.

> *Check Points:* ***The team should use the following list to review the connection between the prompt and the standards/expectations the prompt assesses. This sheet should be completed electronically and given to the recorder.***

□   Does the task contain material that students from identifiable cultural, linguistic, gender, or other groups are likely to be very familiar or very unfamiliar with?
□   Does the task ask students to do things that they are unlikely to have done before or have an aversion to doing based due to background, culture, or other difference?
□   Is the task free of stereotypes?
□   Can all students attempt the task from a level playing field? (If not, does it take accommodations into account?)
□   Will all students have equal access to any requisite resources (e. g., calculators, spell check, internet, etc.)?
□   Are the assessment conditions (e.g., time) the same for all students?
□   Does the task ask for a performance that can reasonably be completed under the specified conditions?
□   Has the task been reviewed by people knowledgeable about or representative of various cultures?
□   Is the rubric clear?

JUDGING the VALIDITY of a TASK

Assessing Important Proficiencies

Tasks are not like quizzes or multiple-choice tests. Quizzes and multiple choice tests are designed to assess whether a student has memorized content or can perform relatively straightforward operations within the content material (simple logical deductions, induction, arithmetical operations, etc.) Tasks, on the other hand, ask students to use this kind of knowledge to solve more challenging and authentic tasks, to exercise judgment in relation to more complex issues, to communicate with a specified intent, etc.

Students are prepared to perform on tasks more rigorously than they are prepared for quizzes; student performance on tasks is assessed in a more complex way than performance on quizzes; and student performance on tasks is incorporated into subsequent teaching. For all these reasons, students will take fewer tasks than quizzes or tests during their high school career, and this puts a premium on the quality of the task they take.

Goal. The tasks students take should assess important skills that are used frequently and are critically important both in and of themselves, and as platforms for building more complex proficiencies.

*Check Points: **The team should use the following list to review the connection between the prompt and the standards/expectations the prompt assesses. This sheet should be completed electronically and given to the recorder.***

□	Does the task assess a proficiency that is consistent with the best current understanding of the field about what is important?
□	Does the task reflect judgments about what is important that will stand the test of time?
□	Does the task assess a proficiency of adequate breadth within possible important content?
□	Is the task representative of the different ways in which the targeted proficiency could be demonstrated?
□	Does the task require that students use what they have learned to do in authentic, real-world tasks?
□	Does the task present a meaningful problem and represent a worthwhile educational experience? (Is the task relevant?)
□	Does the task target an appropriate level of difficulty?
□	Does the rubric assess the task?